

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a filter skimmer intake guard, and in particular to a guard for the skimmer opening for swimming pools or hot tubs, which mounted on the walls of the pool to prevent the accidental blockage of the skimmer opening and/or pipe behind the intake. Further, the field of this skimmer intake guard invention relates to one that is simple for installation, economical, does not inhibit the use of the pool or tub and can, but does not ever need to be removed for cleaning, maintenance or winterization.

The modern day swimming pool faces an ever-changing amount of use and operating conditions. There are increasing amounts and types of pool accessories, toys, floatation devices and other man made objects available and in use in pools today.

An ongoing problem is the frequency in which these toys and floatation devices enter the skimmer. Because a pool filter is continuously running, eventually all pool water is pumped through the skimmer opening, it is difficult to prevent blockage of skimmer intake opening.

One of the shortcomings of the current skimmer opening is that larger items often enter the skimmer intake and become trapped in the filter basket. This can reduce the efficiency of the pump and filtration system, but can also cause the pool pump(s) to cavitate and possibly fail or burn out.

Previous skimmer screens have addressed the collection of leaves and debris from the skimmer, but all of these devices utilize a device that is attached the pool or skimmer and intrudes into the pool, becoming a hazard to swimmers, or needs to be removed while swimming.

A market exists for a skimmer intake guard that is easily attached, economically simple, does not inhibit use of the pool or create safety hazards, when installed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

There have been many prior attempts to create deflectors, screens, and shields, which primarily are intended to collect leaves, twigs and other debris, and increase the effectiveness of filtering. Many of these devices attach permanently to the pool, intrude upon the swimming area, and create safety hazards. Those attempts have many shortcomings for limiting pool use, maintenance and pool and/or deck safety..

In U.S. Pat. No. 3,314,543 to Nash a pool skimmer system is disclosed which incorporates screen cages which are mounted beneath the deck of the pool in line with the skimmer openings and above the trough associated with the skimmer system. The cages are provided to prevent debris from entering the filters.

Unfortunately, these cages are placed within the intake openings where they are difficult to access, and still allow large floatation devices to enter the skimmer opening and prevent water flow to the pumps.

In U.S. Pat. No. 4,140,634 to Harry, a swimming pool skimmer shield is disclosed which is designed to be mounted to the side walls of a pool. The patent discloses the use of hooks or fasteners, which are driven into the sidewalls of the pool on opposite sides of the skimmer openings. Thereafter a nylon mesh fabric with 3/16" diameter holes is suspended so as to extend across the full width of a skimmer intake opening to block and catch debris at the opening. Unfortunately, the structure disclosed in this patent requires that fasteners be utilized to secure the shields to the sidewall of the pool. It is neither practical nor desirable to compromise the integrity of the sidewalls of the pool by driving fasteners into the walls adjacent the intake openings. Further, the screen is positioned in the pool area providing a safety hazard for swimmers.

In U.S. Pat. No. 5,935,450 to Benedict, pool skimmer screens is disclosed which incorporates a screen cage which covers the intake and is frictionally engaged on the sidewalls of the intake or are hooked over the weir hinge pins inside the intake. In general, this patent discloses the mesh size to allow for minimum resistance to fluid flow and provide for maximum retention of debris. The patent discloses the primary objections to be the screening devices for preventing debris from entering the intake opening of the pool filter or skimmer system.

In U.S. Pat. No. 6,241,217 to Sliger, Jr., a skimmer screen for a swimming pool is disclosed which incorporates a rounded screen cage, which covers the intake and securely mounted to the sidewall of the intake. In general, this patent discloses a new skimmer screen of rounded fashion, with a screen mesh. The patent discloses the primary objections to be the screening devices for preventing debris and other objects from entering the intake opening of the pool filter or skimmer system.

In general, the above listed patents have only a limited relevance. These devices have been developed for the prevention and collection of debris and leaves. They each are intended to collect debris and should not be used while swimming, as they would be a safety hazard. They each use a mesh or screen of some type of material, configured in a cage or box design, which attaches in some fashion to the intake, and protrudes into the pool.

The advantage of our device over the aforementioned body of prior art is significant. It prevents medium and large toys, floatation devices, noodles, other pool accessories and man-made devices, made from plastic or foam material, which easily enters the filter intake, when the above prior art is removed for swimming. The filter guard can stay in place during swimming and does not protrude into the pool. In addition, it does not prevent the installation or use of many of the debris collection devices listed above.

In view of the foregoing, there still remains the need for a new skimmer intake guard to prevent medium and large toys, floatation devices and other pool accessories from entering the skimmer, while not modifying the pool or encroaching upon the swimming area, which can be safely used year round.

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The general purpose of the skimmer intake guard is to provide not a screen, but a new guard, which can be used while swimming in the pool, and will not be a hazard to those swimming. These advantages of the skimmer intake guard provide a new guard, which has not been anticipated, suggested or implied by any of the prior art swimming pool screens, either alone or in any combination thereof.

To attain this, the present invention generally comprises of a grid system of injected molded plastic or equivalent, that is molded to a frame that snaps over the intake frame, and is held in place by up to four (4) integrally molded hooks; or is mounted to the face of the frame by alternate means, such as Velcro fasteners, other hook and loop, or other attachable or adhesive method; or is molded as part of the frame or cover for such frame.

The grid system is one of multiple possible designs, being square, rectangular, triangular or any combination thereof. The openings of the grid system are large enough to allow leaves and debris to pass, but small enough to prevent medium and large toys, floatation devices, noodles, other pool accessories and man-made devices, from entering and blocking the intake.

The skimmer intake guard can be made to fit any variety of size or shape of filter intake openings, and can be designed to attach to any opening or to be integrated by manufacturing it together with the frame.

The primary object of the invention is to provide a guard for preventing medium and large toys, floatation devices, noodles, other pool accessories and man-made devices, from entering the filter intake.

An object of the invention is to increase the efficiency of circulation systems for swimming pools or the like.

A further object of the invention is to provide apparatus for use in a swimming pool or the like for guarding the skimmer intake from medium and large toys, floatation devices, noodles, other pool accessories and man-made devices, while not restricting pool use, or inhibiting safety.

A still further object of the invention is to provide apparatus for use in a swimming pool or the like for shielding the skimmer mouth and protecting the water filtration system from medium and large toys, floatation devices, noodles, other pool accessories and man-made devices, which is economical in construction and simple in operation.

Still yet another object of the present invention is to provide a new skimmer intake guard for a swimming pool that can be conveniently and unobtrusively mounted over the skimmer intake of a swimming pool, and does not inhibit use of the swimming pool.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a new skimmer intake guard for a swimming pool, which is of a durable and reliable construction.

An even further object of the present invention is to provide a new skimmer intake guard for a swimming pool, which has a low cost of manufacture with regard to both materials and labor, and which has a lower price of sale for the consuming public, and simple enough installation, as to make such skimmer intake guard for a swimming pool economically available to the buying public.

DRAWING AMENDMENTS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 shows front elevation view of the skimmer intake guard, with details of the use of hooks to attach the skimmer intake guard to the face of the intake.

FIG. 2 is a side elevation view of the skimmer intake guard of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a top elevation view of the skimmer intake guard of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the skimmer intake guard of FIG 1.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of swimming pool filter intake with the invention present.

FIG 6 shows a diagonal grid pattern for the skimmer intake guard for FIG. 1.

FIG 7 shows a rectangular grid pattern for the skimmer intake guard for FIG. 1.

FIG 8 shows a vertical grid pattern for the skimmer intake guard for FIG. 1.

FIG 9 shows a horizontal grid pattern for the skimmer intake guard for FIG. 1.

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to the drawings, and in particular to FIGS. 1 through 4, the skimmer intake guard is preferably made of a white, semi-rigid plastic material, or the like, and can be made of any color. The skimmer intake guard is manufactured by an injection molding process, or equivalent thermal forming process. The injection molding process provides for a single piece skimmer intake guard, which can be easily installed. This is a vast improvement over prior art screen designs, that required multiple pieces, assembly and complex installation.

The skimmer intake guard **10** is constructed in such that the guard face is slightly larger in size than the intake opening, and of similar thickness. The guard face is a rectangle shape, same as the intake opening. On the vertical sides of the skimmer intake guard, are two (2) molded snap hooks **20**, which protrude 90 degrees from the face of the guard, into the skimmer intake. The hooks snap on the inside of the skimmer intake and hold it in place. On the back of the hook, is a small detent **25**, which allows the guard hooks to be released and the guard can be removed.

The skimmer intake guard **10** can also be constructed without the hooks, to be attached to the face of the skimmer intake by the use of Velcro fasteners, other hook and loop, or other attachable or adhesive method.

From the top and bottom, left and right frame, small diameter cross members or bars **30** are molded in such a way as to create a pattern, either square FIG. 4., diagonal FIG. 6. or rectangular FIG. 7. across the face of the frame, thus creating the guard. Also, the cross-members may be molded all in one direction, either vertically FIG. 8, or horizontally FIG. 9, or may be comprised of any design or pattern, such as a logo, letter, symbol or other such pattern that could be created.

This cross pattern of plastic prevents medium and large toys, floatation devices, noodles, other pool accessories and man-made devices from entering the skimmer. In addition, by blocking the items prior to entering the skimmer, these items are visually noticeable and indicate the action is required to clear the items.